

17 August 1972

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Dear Harvey:

I was interested to see the rather orthogonal interaction in the August 4th Letters in Science. What I suspect you do not give enough credit to is the intensity with which wholly irrational views of inequality are entertained by many people. I have a few parentheses on this question in some of my attached writings (which I hope will provoke some reciprocity) and I could also refer you to an entire book on "envy" by Schoeck, which somewhat overplays the point that envy is one of those subjects studiously avoided in polite discourse. Nat Glazer, of course, has also had a lot to say about the dilemmas of welfare and attempts to meet claims for the redress of inequality as perceived by different cultures.

Seeing this exchange reminded me, however, of the very preliminary discussion we had during the meeting at Annual Reviews concerning the possibilities of an "Annual Review of Science". I am particularly concerned that we try to find some mechanism by which our thinking about these general problems can be made more efficiently cumulative than it often has been since so much time is now spent in going over issues that have been well worked in previous eras. The fragmentation of the literature on general questions of science is just one many sources of this problem, but it may be one we can help do something about, for example, by a vehicle like the Annual Review of Science. What I have in mind, and believe you were quite sympathetic to in our earlier discussion, was a recognized place for the systematic treatment of those issues, both substantive and polemical, that had arisen during the previous year. ("Year" should not be taken too literally).

I have some general thoughts on the kinds of issues that might be included in such a review and I have outlined them in a first draft as attached. However, I would put more emphasis on the general principle

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that such a review should include perspectives on every aspect of non-specialized scientific concern. That is, its subject matter should range over the whole set of issues that are likely to be a common focus of thought of all scientists, regardless of their special discipline. This will include some of the content of scientific work, but I did not have in mind semi-technical treatments like those so well covered by Scientific American. Of course, there would necessarily be great emphasis on the cultural and political aspects of science, its applications, and its support. I also had in mind that we not neglect the methodology of science (logic, philosophy), the problems of science as a profession, and the ethical problems that are alleged to be an outcome of the commitment of science to objective truth. I am sure you would be able readily to improve on the general outline that I have attached and I hope I can have some contribution from you in that direction.

If we, and perhaps a few others whom you might wish to help nominate, could put together a more coherent proposal, I would like to bring it up at the next board meeting of Annual Reviews although for a number of reasons I doubt that this is something that could be initiated immediately. One of the questions that would surely arise is who would be likely to accept the obligation of editing such a volume and your name is bound to arise in such a connection. Before you are frightened off by this, let me assure you, however, that in any such possible enterprise I would be glad to offer a good deal of my own energies and I am sure there are others who could be called upon as well. Quite apart from that consideration, I hope you will give me the benefit of your views about what ought to be included in such a prospectus and then whether you think the whole enterprise is worth pursuing.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor and Chairman
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